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Tune in a little on-line diversion

DIGITAL SURVIVOR

JIM CARROLL

If you're like many employees, you are probably in a situation where your personal computer has recently been upgraded.

So you've got a new high-end PC that features all the latest and coolest multimedia features, and a fast connection to the Internet. Speakers sit on either side of your monitor, and are most often silent.

Why not spice up your working life with a little bit of music, especially now that you have a PC with enough power to provide you with some fascinating capabilities?

An Internet-linked PC becomes a marvelous music machine for the office — as long as you don't play things so loudly it upsets your workplace neighbours. You can quickly find innovative software programs that will let you tune into all kinds of on-line radio stations.

One of the most popular audio programs, preinstalled on many PCs, is RealPlayer from RealNetworks (**www.real.com**). A tour through the Web site will lead you into a massive world of on-line broadcast, involving access to countless radio stations as well as customized music lists.

There are alternatives. Visit the Spinner site (**www.spinner.com**) and you can download its Spinner-Plus software. This will let you tune into more than 120 "stations," with enough musical genres available to satisfy any taste.

With Spinner, you're not simply tuning in existing public broadcasters as you might with RealNetworks. You're listening to specialized stations put on-line by the Spinner folks, so you often have a far more eclectic list of music to choose from.

There are many other similar services — sites such as NetRadio (**www.netradio.com**), RadioMoi (**www.radiomoi.com**), and RadioSpy (**www.radiospy.com**), each of which will let you find all kinds of stations.

If you want to tune into the ultimate in user-driven radio on-line, grab a copy of WinAmp (**www.winamp.com**), and then visit Shoutcast (**www.shoutcast.com**). This service enables people to establish their own radio stations.

Listening to music can be lots of fun at work, but there are plenty of video sites that you can visit, too. In addition to RealNetworks, Scour (**www.scour.net**) and Broadcast.com (**www.broadcast.com**) provide methods by which you can search for video clips.

Keep your ear to the ground on some of the more innovative on-line projects. For example, Troops (**www.theforce.net/troops**) is a hilarious video that parodies *Star Wars* to the *COPS* TV show theme.

Exploring this world, you can turned your new-fangled PC into a great machine to access audio and video on the Internet. Not only will you have some workplace entertainment, but you'll discovered some of the ways in which the Internet is evolving.

But keep this in mind: You may not want to be doing a lot of this while you're working. And if your organization doesn't have a fast connection to the Net, you may cause extreme stress to the folks in the information technology department, who could react with horror to the idea that staff members are wasting precious bandwidth.

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Jim Carroll is co-author of Light Bulbs to Yottabits: How to Profit by Understanding the Internet of the Future, *and can be reached by E-mail at jcarroll@jimcarroll.com*